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The Lash of LaRouche

Perennial Candidate Sees Worldwide Plots

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B'nai B'rith is a terrorist organization that kidnaps children, Henry A. Kissinger is "a faggot," the International Monetary Fund is committing genocide, Walter F. Mondale is a KGB "agent of influence," and a Jewish spy for Britain helped assassinate Abraham Lincoln, but "he was not acting as a Jew."

Welcome to the unsettled world of Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., the perennial presidential candidate who has spent much of the last 13 years making these and other scurrilous and totally unsupported allegations.

LaRouche, 63, is a political chameleon. In the 1960s he was a Marxist theoretician who lectured followers in Greenwich Village about economics. Now he is the leader of a worldwide sect with up to 1,000 members that lustily em-

braces many of President Reagan's programs, including the U.S. military buildup and the "Star Wars" missile defense system.

Two weeks ago LaRouche pulled perhaps his most unlikely outflanking movement. Two supporters won Democratic nominations for lieutenant governor and secretary of state of Illinois, prompting gubernatorial nominee Adlai E. Stevenson III to say that he would not run on the Democratic ticket with them.

The Illinois primary sent the national Democratic Party into a panic, although during the last few years the LaRouche organization has been sharpening its political skills and reaching a growing audience.

In the 1970s, LaRouche supporters ran for office under the banner of his U.S. Labor Party, but their electoral efforts did not take off

until 1980, when they formed a new electoral arm, the National Democratic Policy Committee.

The group runs several hundred candidates a year. Some, at various times, have received 30 percent to 40 percent of the vote in congressional districts around the nation. They have won local seats and Democratic Party posts.

LaRouche's group has moved quickly to take advantage of the Illinois primary outcome, making available some articulate members to reporters and modifying its rhetoric as it seeks mainstream status.

But the movement is anything but mainstream and has been denounced from many quarters for years. LaRouche "leads what may be one of the strangest political groups in American history," the conservative Heritage Foundation said. "LaRouche has managed to attract a small but fanatical following to his conspiratorial view of the world."

The AFL-CIO said, "Mostly, he confounds people in various circles, but he also works hard to gain respectability out in front of his shadowy empire."

LaRouche runs his organization from a heavily guarded mansion on 170 acres in rural Loudoun County, Va. Two years ago, LaRouche moved his national headquarters, including hundreds of followers, from Manhattan to Leesburg, upsetting his new neighbors, who say they cannot understand his statements and are afraid of his bodyguards carrying semiautomatic weapons.

His people have been sinking roots in Leesburg, buying prime real estate, joining the Chamber of Commerce and starting a local newspaper with, among other folksy features, a gardening column.

It is a long journey from where he started.

Apparently rebelling against his New England Quaker background, LaRouche joined the Socialist Workers Party in the 1940s. By the late 1960s in New York, he had

gathered around him a loyal group of a few hundred leftists. He took the name Lyn Marcus, and called his group the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC). In 1968 it briefly took over a student strike at Columbia University, but was kicked out of the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) for ideological differences.

Followers from that period describe him as a brilliant lecturer, although one found him "eccentric and odd."

Things started to change in 1973, when he ordered supporters to study karate and street-fighting. In December of that year, he announced that the Central Intelligence Agency had kidnapped a British follower and brainwashed him to assassinate LaRouche. In long and emotional sessions, LaRouche accused followers of disloyalty and berated them about their supposed sexual problems and political weaknesses.

During this period LaRouche also elaborated on the numerous supposed plots against him and humanity by a shifting pantheon of enemies. He has been constantly surrounded by armed guards since then, and today maintains that the KGB and the Libyans are after him.

The group went onto a kind of war footing in 1974, with many supporters quitting jobs and cutting family ties. The authoritarian atmosphere established then continues, fed by fear of imminent attack by evil outsiders, according to former LaRouche followers, experts on the group and published reports.

"It's a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day total immersion," said one dropout who, like others interviewed, declined to be identified for fear of retribution. "People wouldn't have any private lives any more . . . Everyone's got to march to the same tune."

LaRouche and his supporters deny that the NCLC is a cult, saying he has no control over supporters.

By the mid-1970s, the group could be described less as Marxist than as conspiracy-minded, allying itself with neo-Nazi and extreme rightist individuals who shared its conspiratorial world view.

This was the period when LaRouche and his followers began making statements widely described as anti-Semitic. They said